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CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER AS THE HOPE OF GLORY.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.—Colossians, I. 27.

In the words of our text, the Apostle speaks of the Gospel under the title of a "mystery." Such it was, considered simply as resident in the unrevealed intentions of the Divine Mind; it was unknown to men, both in its nature and application, until developed by its Author. It was especially unknown to the Jews in its overture of mercy to the Gentile world. They had monopolized the favors of Heaven, and to them it seemed mysterious that a religion claiming to proceed from Jehovah, should look benignantly upon any but themselves. The Apostle, as the messenger of Christ to the Gentiles, seeks to correct this delusion; he sets forth the Gospel as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," whatever may have been his previous condition, or national character. As now administered by him, it was no mystery, either in its facts or its requisitions, or the persons to whom it might be properly commended. The evolution effected by Christ and his Apostles, had dissipated all the darkness which hitherto obscured these important points. It might indeed contain mysteries of another type; but the particular form of mystery had in view by the Apostle, had altogether disappeared. This very mystery is now "made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Obscurity had receded before the march of light; and Christ now dwelling in the Colossian Christian, as the hope of glory, is the mystery unveiled, and transformed into the simplicity of apprehensible truth. This mystery is Christ himself, Christ now "made manifest to his saints, Christ "in you, the hope of glory."

In the ensuing reflections, I shall ask your attention to this expression of the Apostle—"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

I. In the first place, let us endeavor to understand the first item in this significant expression, i. e., "*Christ in you.*"—Every careful reader of the Bible must be familiar with the fact, that Christ is frequently spoken of as being in His people; also that they are represented as being in Him. The passages containing this style of description are abundant in the New Testament. They suggest for our consideration this question: In what *sense* is Christ in His people? The theologians of Rome have built upon these passages the doctrine of a *mystical* union between the believer and his Savior, and garnished it with the dogma of a mediating priesthood of men, to create and perpetuate this union. This union is not one of faith—not an union with spiritual exercises in us, and divine influences from Him, for its basis; but something which *transcends* all these ideas—physical, or semi-physical, totally inexplicable in its nature, and hence called *mystical*. It seems psychologically to confound the two beings, and mould them into one existence. Upon it rests the chief efficacy of the Sacrament, to secure which there must be the prior fact of transubstantiation, and to accomplish the latter there must be a mediating priesthood of men, with full powers. The reformation under Luther opened the era for the explosion of this monstrous *quadruped* error; it brought into clear light the doctrine of forensic justification by faith in Christ Jesus, abolished the system of *physiological* grace, and did much to return men to the simplicity and purity of apostolic times. We have no doubt that Luther was right—much nearer to the Apostles than the Romanists, or the Oxfordists of the present day. We need not go to the incomprehensibilities of the mystical union with its cognate absurdities, to make the words of the text and of parallel scriptures instructive to the intelligence, and immensely precious to the heart. The Protestant version is one which does honor to the language, and makes the fact one of inexhaustible good to him, whose soul is its subject. In the analysis of this fact, the following particulars may be named, as constituting the *indwelling* of Christ:

1. *He dwells in the believer in the intellectual, or doctrinal sense.*—"What think ye of Christ? is the test to try both your state and your scheme." Than this there never was a truer saying. Our conceptions of the blessed Savior involve a point of infinite moment; sure it is, that "we cannot be right in the rest, unless we think rightly of Him." To the question, what are we to think of Christ? the Bible returns a suitable answer; an answer, expressed in our creeds, but more fully drawn out in finer and richer shades in the very words of the sacred text. Now when we receive into our minds, as objects of conviction and firm belief, the disclosures of revelation in regard to Christ, then He is *in us* in the intellectual or doctrinal sense—a sense, which precedes all others, as it is the foundation of all others. He is then resident in our intelligence, the object of thought and meditation, wrapt up in the visions of the soul. In this sense, it will be perceived, there may be *degrees*

in the fullness, completeness, and power, with which he dwells in us. I am persuaded, that some Christians have much better views of their Redeemer than others; views, which make the heart burn, and evoke from retirement the moral sensibilities of true piety. This difference is not owing to a difference in the object, but to a difference in the use of our powers upon the object, and the means which conduct us thereto. For this reason, the impenitent have almost no idea of Christ; they are so occupied with the world, that they do not think enough of Him even to understand Him. They can explain the particular channel of their industry; but you put the question, what think ye of Christ? and their answer, if any, is but a miserable pattern of the truth. The same reason operates to produce diversity in the vividness and extent of view which is taken by Christian minds. It is not sufficient for us to adopt a system of religious symbols, however correct, and then permit them to sleep in the dormitory of a lifeless orthodoxy. This will never realize to us the idea of having our life "hid with Christ in God." We must learn how to transfer to our own minds, and there retain in living and everlasting remembrance, the teachings of God in regard to Him, who is the Prince of Peace, the Author of eternal salvation to every one that believeth. To accomplish this transfer, no better plan can be adopted than diligently and prayerfully to study the Scriptures. When they introduce to us a new conception, or a new phase of a previous conception, we must take it, most thoroughly digest it, and then add it to our stock of Christian knowledge. By this process, we shall experience a progressive enlargement of understanding; the term, *Christ*, will become something more than a mere Shibboleth, a mere religious watchword for party organization, or an appendage to fill up some little niche in the plan of redemption. He will jut out in bright effulgence, and cast His radiance over the whole scheme of life. Let us also be careful not to separate Him from those doctrines of the Bible, which define Him, and explain the methods and ends of His action; as careful not to separate them from Him. He magnifies the doctrines of redemption; and they also magnify Him. Without Him these doctrines are but mere abstractions, having no more power, than a mathematical theorem. Without them also He is not "the way, the truth and the life," as disclosed in the Bible. In disjoining the two, we do serious harm to both, and almost destroy their good impression upon our minds. The atonement itself degenerates into the emptiness of mere words, if we view it as disconnected with Him, who made it. Let us therefore be careful to keep the Worker and the work always combined in our minds; and when we travel from the one, be sure to carry the other with us. The Christianity of the New Testament is a Christianity of *concretes*, not of depleted *abstracts*; and it is best that we should have it in our minds, as God has placed it in the Bible.

2. *Christ dwells in the believer, as a Being who engages his affectionate confidence.*—The intellectual indwelling of Christ lays

a solid and changeless basis for this confidence. Being properly seen, He is seen to be such a Being, that the pious mind not only feels that it *ought* to trust, but is also conscious of the fact that it *does* trust in Him. Nothing in Him is perceived which is calculated to intimidate or repel our approach, but everything to invite and win our utmost affection and faith. The fact that we are sinners, that we feel intensely the moral demerit of sin, that our past character is a never ceasing badge of reproach and guilt, is the fact in us, the argument subsisting in our condition, why we should betake ourselves to the cross, and go to Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin. This is what in our condition we *must* do, unless we adopt the plan of *self-merit*, thus proving that we are not believers in His name. As we approach Him, we find His throne luminous with promise; the sceptre of peace and pardon is extended, that we may touch it and live. Having come to Him, having looked up to God through Christ, exclaiming "Abba Father," then our wisdom is to remain in this posture, neither receding *from* it, nor attempting to pass *beyond* it, for we can do nothing better than to love and trust our Savior. The language of our hearts should be—

"My faith looks up to thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine."

This is to be our spiritual *dialect* while we live—the last action of our souls as we quit this mortal sphere, and rise to worlds unseen. It is this which keeps the Christian out of the slough of *dependency*, so graphically pictured by Bunyan. His confidence in Christ is the right arm of his soul—the moral lever, on which and through which he exerts his strength. It does not look out upon a *vacuum*, and weary itself in searching for a resting point. Though the object be invisible, yet the mind is privileged to act "as seeing Him, who is invisible." It overleaps the limitation set by the senses—folds up in its own convictions the facts of Revelation; these constitute a luminous pathway, on which it makes a rapid journey to the residence of the Immortal King, with whom to make a cheerful deposit of itself and all its interests. Here it is, and nowhere else, that we can realize the truth of the Savior's promise, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." To the soul leaning upon Christ He substantially says, "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." How gloriously therefore is Christ in the mind of the believer, as a Being engaging his fullest confidence! He gave Him this confidence in the matter of his salvation, when he first believed; and he has seen no subsequent occasion for withdrawing it; all his experience goes to confirm and increase it.

Although the *objective* grounds of this confidence are in themselves unchangeable, yet the exercise in us is capable of increase, from the point of conversion to the full assurance of faith—resulting in a state which casts out all fear, and imparts a heavenly composure, such as the world can neither give nor take away. The more frequent the exercise, the stronger it becomes, and the more expanded and impressive appear the reasons which justify it. This process of growth, vigorously kept up in the soul, may reach a state of enlarged maturity, and ascend to a point of amazing power. How far we have advanced as Christians towards this happy attainment, it is not my province to decide. Christ may have been in us the hope of glory, yet in a very *defective* and imperfect manner; we may not have honored Him with our confidence, as we should. If so, then let the past suffice—let us not compare ourselves among ourselves, but strive individually to exercise more of a pure, simple and affectionate trust in Him, and this trust more constantly. Nothing prevents our rising but ourselves; and we do rise as fast as, on the whole, we wish. To envy the attainments of others who have gone far beyond us, is as selfish as it is profitless. The path they trod with so much delight invites our feet; and if we choose to be tardy on this heavenly road, let us remember it is because we will have it so.

3. *Christ dwells in the believer by the assimilating energy of His own most glorious character.*—Nothing is more familiar, than our tendency to derive our mental and moral complexion from objects with which we are frequently in contact, which habitually engage our thoughts, and deeply interest the sympathies and affections of our hearts. Children in this way learn the manners and inherit the moral features of their parents, whether for good or evil. The sailor carries upon his mind the impress of the rolling ocean and the wild howling storm. Those who associate with the degraded, themselves become degraded; those who mingle with the virtuous, inhale the balmy influences of a purer life. Companionship with very devoted Christians has a tendency to make us devoted; they spontaneously impart, and we as spontaneously receive—we come more or less to resemble them by the frequency of our intercourse with them.

This principle of our mental nature, as you perceive, is a principle of *assimilation*, by which given properties beget in us their own image. Through this principle the character of Christ is made effective in moulding that of His people. If He dwell in them in the intellectual sense, if He be an object of implicit confidence and strong affection, the tendency is to make them Christ-like. A painful and protracted controversy, subsisting between two members of the same church, was once brought under my review. The one felt herself most deeply injured by the other. To the aggrieved it was suggested, that she probably over-estimated the injury, and judged too severely in regard to the motives of the offending party. These thoughts seemed to produce no impres-

sion for good. The following train of reflection was then proposed: Let it be granted that the injury is all you suppose, and the motives as bad—the question then is, How ought you to feel and treat the offender? That you may decide this question properly, place yourself before the cross, and behold the Son of God, your Savior, in the agonies of death—hear Him exclaiming, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Now will you be *Christ-like*, or not? Her mind was overwhelmed—tears began to flow; and, after a moment's struggle, she replied, "Yes, I will be *Christ-like*!" She arose, went to an adjoining room, and made a hearty confession. This drew out another; peace was proclaimed, and sealed with prayer. In this case you see the power of a *single* feature in the Savior's character to begot itself in the character of an erring, but genuine disciple. Now that which is true of one feature, is as true of His *whole* character. The whole is a perfect model of moral beauty, presented as our example and designed for our imitation. As we hold intercourse with it, we more and more perceive its transcendent excellence. We cannot fail to admire it, and, if we have the least spark of piety, to love its Author. That man is a total stranger to religion who does not love Christ in the light of his moral character. That which we admire in a being whom we love, can never be an object of steady thought, without *transforming* us somewhat into his likeness. The more we love, the greater the transforming power of the model, and the greater the power, the more we love—the two principles interweaving their agency to make a soul like Him, who is the great example of mankind. This process of assimilation does not consist in an *imputation* of His moral righteousness to us, but in a spiritual *procreation* in us of that which is seen in Him. Beholding the glory of the Lord, we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

It may be suggested, that, as a mere *thesis*, this is a very pleasant picture for the Christian to look upon; but why, as a matter of fact, are the disciples so unlike their Lord and Master? Why do they possess so little of His Spirit? Some seem disposed to think, that it is not *possible* in this world, all things considered, to be very devoted as saints of the Most High God—that but very little of the spirit of our Master is to be sought in this unfriendly clime—that no great efforts are to be made, no living proximity to Him attained, until we see Him in the heavenly world, face to face. This view contradicts the Bible, contradicts the experience of the Apostles, also the experience of some Christians called *eminent*, not because they are such, when compared with the claims and character of Christ, but simply to mark the difference between them and other Christians. Others again seem to imagine, that the *inner* Christianity of Christ's disciples is of a much purer type than the *outward*; and hence external appearances are not the proper index to the state of the heart. This upon its face is a

very suspicious theory. It repeals the law of Heaven, which fixes upon the fruits of piety as its proper evidence. This *concealed* religion, so modest that it never shows itself—that has no public testimony to render—never visible in the life—with no outward phase, which either God or man can see—*this*, I am persuaded, is not the religion of the New Testament. True piety seeks the air; *real* love to Christ and conformity to His character must have an outward expression. It is infinitely important that this should be the case, so that the world may see and feel its power. Let us not therefore balance our account with duty, and turn off a painful inquiry by assuming for ourselves a *hidden* religion, not only veiled, but incompatible with external appearances. The probability is, that our *inner* Christianity is no better than the *outward*; and in many cases it is not as good, for worldly motives may secure an external deportment, which does not arise from Christian feelings, and which would not exist but for those worldly motives.

If there be a *total* want of the moral features which shone so conspicuously in the character of Christ, then it is perfectly certain that we are not Christians—that not even the *first* principles of piety have been planted in our hearts, whatever may be our hopes. Our character as Christians must survive this test, or we are building on the sand. If these features, however, exist in us, yet in a very *defective* and *imperfect* manner, then the cause of the deficiency is to be sought in two directions—i. e. *in what we do, and in what we omit to do*. If Christians, under any pretence, will bury up a large part of their affections with the things of this world—if they will not learn to live for Christ in all that they do, and thus make every act a means of grace—if they will not devoutly study the Bible—if they will not hold earnest and frequent communions with Heaven—if they will not live in contact with the glorious character and wonderful work of the Son of God: then, in exact proportion to their waywardness in these and kindred particulars, will they feel or not feel the assimilating power of Christ in their hearts, and evince the same in their lives. In the nature of things it cannot be otherwise. If, on the other hand, we be faithful according to our privileges, and appreciate life mainly as a brief season for doing good and preparing for eternal glory, then we shall be proportionately like our Savior; and, as the distance between us and the tomb shortens, it will be more and more manifest, that we are His and on our way to heaven. There is no danger, unless we diverge into the folly of self-righteousness, spiritual pride, and self-ignorance, that we shall outstrip our privileges. Sound, judicious, and Bible efforts to be assimilated into the image of the Son are always safe; they never did the Christian any harm—they cannot fail to do him good. You never retired to your closet to pray over your own condition, asking God to forgive it and grant a better one, without a benediction in the very act. You never spent an hour in devout study and reflection

upon the character of your Redeemer, his sufferings in your behalf, the wonders of his grace, without having your affections drawn towards Him, and your spiritual sympathies silently yielding to a glorious impulse from the heavenly world. Let us then multiply these and parallel scenes; in this way shall the image of Christ be developed in the experience of our hearts, and his religion become truly the theme and the song of our lives.

II. Having now formed some conception of an *indwelling* Christ, let us contemplate Him under the second phase of the text, i. e. as "*the hope of glory*."

What is hope? It is the desire of some future good, attended with an expectation of obtaining it. Whoever desires some good, not now in his possession, and expects to realize that good, has in his soul the phenomenon of hope. Remove the expectation, and you convert his condition into one of *despair*, painful in proportion to the intensity of the disappointed desire. The *validity* of hope depends, not upon the strength of desire, but upon the grounds which support the expectation that the desired good shall be obtained. If there be no such grounds, then the hoper is deceived, and his hope worthless; if they exist in a very imperfect manner, then his hope has a corresponding validity; if they be clear and certain, then his hope is built on a rock.

What then is "the hope of glory?" This hope refers to our personal condition after death. The view commanded by this hope is, that our future state shall be one of endless blessedness, complete and perfect well-being. The mind thus hoping, entertains the most august and rapturous view of its own destiny after death—such as calls forth the most intense desire, as ought to make it happy and cheerful, rob death of its terrors, and fill immortality with charms. The source whence it derives this view is the Bible, on whose pages are spread out the good things God has prepared for them that love Him. The revelations of the Scriptures make the hope, in respect to its object, "*the hope of glory*," "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." As the mind desires, so also it expects one day to share in this glory. This is its posture in regard to itself, its high hope while on the road to eternal scenes.

What then is meant by the proposition, that Christ dwelling in us is "*the hope of glory*?" I suppose the idea is, that the indwelling of Christ, in the senses already explained, *begets* this hope—is its *cause*—lays in the soul the proper foundation for its existence. The causal relation between Christ and this hope may be understood by giving our attention to two particulars.

1. The indwelling of Christ furnishes to the soul the grounds of the hope in question, grounds which are external to the soul, and exist independently of its conditions.

The *Pagan*, unvisited by the light of the Gospel, knows nothing of its realities, its glory, or its power. He does not know that there

is a Gospel for the dying sons of men; the name of *Jesus* has never reached his ear; and of course within his mind Christ does not exist as the hope of glory. His failure, however, to perceive does not lessen the realities of the redemption scheme; it simply cuts him off from communion with them, and leaves him to wander through life, unaided to immortality by their light. This is his sad position. How large his claim upon our Christian benevolence! The *skeptic* of Christian lands *half* perceives—then shuts his eyes—then totally denies—then sinks into utter darkness amid the splendors of noon-day, exiled from eternal wisdom by an intellectual blockade. The *caviler* sports, and at his peril plays with everlasting sun-beams, too merry in his mood, too full of the tricks of sophistry to have Christ installed in his mind as the hope of glory. The *careless* sinner sleeps over the theme, and dies within its sight, not sufficiently awakened to apprehend the amazing worth of the Gospel of Christ, and improve it while he can. All these persons, by their mental posture, are excluded from Christ; He is not in their minds as the hope of glory. While their condition is their own deplorable loss, yet the facts of Christianity live beyond them, independently of them, and will thus live for ever.

Now in distinction from these persons, I have in view a mind in which Christ so dwells, that the system of Christianity, as it comes into this mind, brings with it its own peculiar grounds of hope, and enthrones them upon its deepest convictions. The system transmits its own realities to the bosom of this intelligence, as objects of thought, as elements for hope. In the transmission it undergoes no change; it simply acquires life and locality in the soul as its theatre; it enters that soul as it issued from the Divine mind; it there begets hope, because the foundation for hope exists in the very *nature* of the system. Let me endeavor to make this point perfectly clear to your apprehension.

What is Christianity? The proper answer is, that it is the religion taught, established, confirmed and sealed by Jesus Christ. What then is this religion? I cannot now tell you *all* that it is. It will be sufficient, however, to say, that in the person of Christ it presents a glorious Savior—Himself *central* in a system of divine doctrines, teaching the science of salvation, of which he is the Author—also bearing in full inscription the pledges and promises of God, and thus committing the power of Him who made the universe to the result named in the system, upon the terms specified. What then is this result? I reply, the salvation of the soul—salvation from sin and eternal woe, for the Gospel is "the power of God unto *salvation* to every one that believeth." Who therefore can fail to see, that here lie the grounds of hope for somebody—grounds not created by human belief, as they are not destroyed by human rejection? In its very nature Christianity looks towards the production of hope in the human family; it bids the sinner to rise and cast away his sins, and cast himself upon the resources of God in Christ Jesus; the Christian, to rejoice and

struggle on; telling both that efforts here made shall not be made in vain. Now, suppose that this system shall be carried in one glorious mass into the soul of man, filling up the canals of thought, infusing itself through every conviction, embalming both the intelligence and the heart with its power. What then? I will tell you. *Christ is in that soul the hope of glory.* The truths and promises of the Divine Word have gone inward—taken their seat upon the throne of thought; they have become the aliment of the mind, and now adorn every apartment with the moral furniture of the Gospel. The mind need not ascend into heaven to bring Christ down, or descend into the deep to bring Him up, for the word of faith, which represents Him, is already there, and through it He is there. The doctrines of the Gospel, through which Christ shines, leaving behind Him a long trail of light, every ray of which is a ray of hope, now constitute the spiritual *tapestry* of the soul. Whether you look into its conviction, or into the Bible, you will find the same things, for these convictions are now the receptacles, the vehicles of the words of eternal wisdom. Blessed man is he who carries this treasure *within* himself; heavenly orthodoxy is that which enthrones Christ, not as an abstraction, but as a Divine Savior, imparting the hope of glory. Brilliant vision, which first enshrines the *personality* of the Savior, and then reviews his attributes, the *essential* and the *official*! This is having the word of Christ dwelling in us “richly in all wisdom.” Time may waste, or fires burn up our *paper* creeds; but here is a creed no flame ever touched, whose free and unchained action no prisons ever bound. Misfortune and commercial disaster may cover our earthly heavens with darkness; but here is a hope beyond casualty—itsself a great moral cone of glory, its apex lost in the skies. The opening grave may beckon us to our long sleep in the dust, but as we lie down in its damp and silent chamber, Christ, the hope of glory, will tell us to be of good cheer, for in a little season we shall be with Him in His Kingdom.

2. The indwelling of Christ implies those conditions of the *heart*, which are the appointed and proper antecedents of the hope of glory.

I do not suppose that the impenitent possess anything like that *completeness* of view in regard to the scheme of Christian redemption, which belongs to the child of God. They never can possess it while they keep so far from the scheme. In this position no eloquence or argument can preach it with its proper fullness into their intelligence. I suppose, also, that some Christians have immensely better views on this subject than others. It is really painful to see the horrible ignorance of some in reference to that which is to carry them to heaven; it is their fault and their loss—a dishonor to themselves and their religion. No wonder they are so much in the dark, for they do not read, and study, and pray over their Bibles sufficiently, to have the clearest form of light. They

depend too much upon their preacher to give them ideas ; these they but half digest, hence they sit in the mere twilight of truth.

While then Christians exceed the impenitent in their conceptions of truth, and some Christians far exceed others in the same department, I must not fail to notify you that Christian experience does not *wholly* consist in the mere apprehension of a theory, however divine, beautiful, or sublime. The religion of him, with whom Christ dwells as the hope of glory, is not *naked* thought, even in the loftiest sphere to which thought ever passed. There is something more in that mind. This I have styled "conditions of the heart," in the proposition just announced. These conditions are implied in the fact of an indwelling Christ. Without designating the *extent* of the exercises, I affirm the following things of every Christian, i. e. that he entirely relies upon the merits of Christ for the salvation of his soul; that his affections are drawn out towards Him in the form of love, and that his character in its essential features is like that of his Savior. These are the conditions of a pious heart, a heart in which Christ dwells; and if we cannot abide this test, our hopes are vain, and should at once be relinquished. He is infinitely worthy of our confidence and love; He is also a perfect model for our imitation; and if in these particulars we totally fail, it is self-deception to imagine that we are His. They are the Biblical terms of discipleship, and must be *realities* in us, or we are not the followers of the Lamb. They are also our exalted privileges, and can never be viewed with aversion, except as we ourselves shall be unholy and sinful. We may perfect our theological theories, as we would polish a literary scheme; we may assemble all the Bishops and Popes of the globe to bless us and baptize us, but without these conditions of the heart, we are strangers to Christ, to the true spirit of that religion He gave to man.

The hearer will now observe, that these spiritual conditions constitute that moral state of human being, which according to the rules of the Gospel, is the proper *antecedent* of a hope of glory. They suppose the subject to be standing in a position where the Gospel cannot *fail* to save him—where God is pledged to save him; indeed they are a part of salvation, salvation from sin to holiness in its early stage. They constitute the individual the friend of Christ, from whose hand no power shall ever be able to pluck him. The plan of God is graciously to pardon, and for ever to justify a soul when in this state, and thus, through Christ, invest it with a title to eternal glory. It is a state of mind, which secures salvation to a certainty, not a mere probability, but an absolute certainty, not on account of its meritorious power, but because it connects the soul with Christ and the scheme of life, which is based upon Him. In one word, it is that condition of the soul which the God of the Gospel has designated, as that without which He never will, and with which He always will, bestow eternal life. The thief on the cross said to the expiring Savior, "Lord, remember

me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." He was answered, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." How quickly the Gospel took effect, and became to that dying thief "the power of God unto salvation." His prayer evinced a proper temper towards Christ; and in an instant the whole energies of the divine scheme encircled him, and his salvation was affirmed by Him, who was then shedding his blood to procure it. Let us have the same temper, and substantially the same promise is ours to-day—*this moment—at all times—in life and in death.* How proper it is, that we should always be in this moral state! Christ is worthy of it; it is the only state which can fit us for happiness in a heaven where he reigns. If then it be our state, it is no *presumption* for us to hope, to hope with confidence; not to hope is to do injustice to the Gospel and its promises. The certainty that it is ours, and the certainty of our salvation are always equal to each other.

In view of this train of thought, I ask you to consider the following reflections:—

1. The difficulties which Christians and recent converts experience in regard to their hopes, depend upon one, or all of three causes. They may fail clearly to apprehend the *nature* of hope; they may not distinctly see that it is an exercise of their own minds coming into existence, in certain circumstances. If they in any way *materialize* the term, and then seek for hope, they will of course seek in vain; their very efforts will deepen their own obscurity, and what they seek will always elude their grasp. Hoping is purely a process of the mind, and when the facts are present, which authorize the process, then we are to put forth the exercise, i. e. mentally *do* the work. And if in the light of appropriate facts, the mind refuse to hope, then any labor expended beyond the region of facts to obtain a hope, must necessarily be labor lost. The mind is working at an enormous disadvantage, and the result to which it arrives is more likely to be an optical illusion, than the hope of a Christian, as provided for in the Scriptures. Again, they may fail to apprehend the proper *data*, or Bible grounds for the exercise of hope. These are to be found in the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, and if the great features of this plan lie obscurely in the understanding, the mind is rendered proportionately incompetent to decide the question, whether it ought to hope or not. Feebleness of spiritual perception enfeebles all exercises, which in the order of nature are consequent thereupon. Strong and life-giving views of Christ, as revealed in the economy of redemption, are essential to strong and powerful hope. He will be to us "the hope of glory" according to the fullness with which He dwells in us. If He dwell in our hearts by faith, if His word dwell in us "richly in all wisdom," if we attain the "riches of the full assurance of the understanding," then surely it cannot be difficult to give to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. This high attainment of knowledge is the privilege of him only

who labors to comprehend Christ, as He is made known in the Scriptures. One reason why many Christians hope so feebly, is to be found in the fact, that they know so little of the blessed Savior; and this imperfect knowledge arises from the neglect of God's Holy Word. More study, more mental labor upon the field of revelation would make Christ more precious, by giving the soul a better knowledge of Him; it would increase the *subjective* intensity of all spiritual exercises, by giving a larger and clearer *objective* range to the mind. "The treasures of wisdom and knowledge," which are hid in Christ, are to us of no avail, unless our minds are put in communion with those treasures. They are majestic elements in Him, but efficient in us, only as transferred to our apprehensions. If we would hope with power in Christ, we must be filled with the knowledge of Him "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." If we would have this knowledge, we must make the Bible the *vade mecum* of our lives. This book, properly used, will clarify the pious intelligence, make the heart glow with love, and faith, and hope; it will feed the soul with spiritual manna, and give power to every exercise of the "new man." Its neglect, sinful in itself, is an unconceivable loss in the department of Christian experience. Again, Christians may not treat in a proper manner the question, whether their *piety be genuine*. There is a wide difference between a strenuous effort to serve Christ and thus be His, and an equally strenuous effort to determine that we are His. In the latter case we are likely to be *selfish*—in the former our motive is benevolent and Christian; in the one case we are looking mostly at ourselves—in the other we are contemplating the will of our Master, and seeking to do it; in the one we are not yielding the fruits of piety, but *searching* for them—in the other we *are* yielding these fruits, and thus giving the best evidence that we are Christians, evidence most likely to be apparent to our own eyes. Deep and ardent piety carries with itself an incidental demonstration of its own existence; its nature is to be *self-luminous*; and, if it be the condition of hope, then the speediest way safely to hope is to develop the condition. Whether we are, or are not Christians is not the *great* question of our lives. He who makes it the *chief* point of thought, resolved to do nothing else until he settles this, will find it in experience the most difficult inquiry that ever engaged his powers. Let him take a wiser course, let his mind survey the requirements and privileges of the Gospel of Christ, let him address his heart with the utmost energy to the life of Christian holiness—this is not only the surest way to be a Christian, but also the surest route by which to *discover* the fact. It generates the *evidential* light of piety; it places this light at a point of easy observation; the spiritual eye naturally falls upon it, sees the fact without laborious search; the consciousness of attachment to Christ suggests the reality of union with Him, of safety in His hands, and sweetly unfolds the hope of glory. My brethren, be what you wish to discover, and the dis-

covery will become a comparatively simple work ; here spend your power, and God will give you light.

2. The characteristic, by which all false hopes may be known, is this, *i. e. they are not preceded by the proper antecedents.* This mistake may be committed in either of two ways.

In the *first* place, the mind in hoping, may build its hope on some other plan besides that of the Gospel. The Apostle assures us, that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This proposition excludes everything but Christ in the work of the soul's salvation. The religious experience of the Apostle was conformed to this idea ; he counted all things loss for "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ ;" he depended on nothing else, on no other being. If, therefore, in the exercise of hope, we place our dependence upon anything but Christ, our hope has a *false* antecedent, and is of no value. We may not trust in our own exercises ; we have no authority for trusting in the *general* character of God ; we must give up all and take Christ as our Divine Savior, or in omitting to do so, we lose the benefit of His salvation. It is enough to secure the condemnation of every other scheme, to know that it is not of God, and is condemned by that which is of God. Man may plan ; Christ alone can save. Talk not, sinner, of the plausibility of your theory ; it has no warrant beyond that which you, a worm of the dust, can give it ; you must forsake it, or in keeping it, die with it. You cannot prove its safety in a single item, and the thought that the veto of God is upon it, ought to make you tremble and abandon it. What madness is it in man to put the worthless figments of a dream where God has put His well-beloved Son.

In the *second* place, men may profess to hope in virtue of the Gospel, without accepting and personally appropriating Christ by faith and love. As the Bible reveals but one Savior, so it reveals but *one moral state*, common to all who shall be saved by His blood. We must believe in Him, we must love Him, we must prove both our faith and love by obedience to his commandments ; we must appropriate, according to the Gospel rule, the blessing He proposes to give. This a man cannot do, and remain a hardened sinner, or a mere religious formalist. There are exercises, exercises of the *heart*, in whose absence neither the amplitude, nor the power of the atonement will avail for our salvation. These exercises constitute a *spiritual* religion, accurately delineated in the word of God, having its seat and theatre of exhibition in the soul of man, elementary and essential in his preparation for the privileges and joys of the life to come. To secure these, it is appointed that the Gospel shall be preached, and Jehovah sends down the Holy Spirit to give it power in subduing and changing the hearts of men. The promises shine forth—the law thunders with convicting power—the terrible things of eternity are unveiled, that those, who are in controversy with God, may suspend their opposition, and yield to the claims of Christ. If they decline to do this,

then they will not be saved; and more than this, for "the wrath of God abideth on them," and they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." Sinner, Christ *rejected* by you is not "Christ in you the hope of glory." He, whom you will not love and serve, to whom you will not commit your soul, for whom you will not forsake all things else, does not permit you to hope in Him. If you hope, while thus treating Him, you hope without His authority—against His warning voice; you hope without that state of heart, which is the appointed antecedent of such an exercise. Look then for a change of your moral posture, while you may; despair of all relief except in Christ. "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not;" if the world allure thee, remember, it is to thy ruin. You can now gain what, when lost, you can never regain. Heaven, through Christ, is fairly within your reach. You have no reasons for losing the prize, which do not argue the deepest guilt. Since Christ has died, you *need* not die, and yet you *may*. Will you have "Christ in you the hope of glory?" Weighty question! Treat it, as you will wish to have done, when on trial at the bar of God.

SERMON CCCCXXX.

MOTIVES TO EARLY PIETY.

Those that seek me early shall find me.—Prov. viii. 17.

THE Church of Christ is deeply interested in the character of the rising generation. Its present members are gradually vanishing from the stage, and entering on the recompenses of reward.

Their places must be supplied by others, or the church will soon become extinct. To whom must she look for this supply? To those who are now advanced to manhood and old age? She has so long looked in vain, that she can indulge only a faint expectation of any considerable accession from their number. If, however, she was sure of such an accession—yet their heads also will soon be laid in the dust. But there is a generation coming after us, that will live when we are dead. Thirty years hence they will occupy our places on the stage of life, and regulate all the important concerns of man. If the church then exists, it will be composed of those who are now young. If the pure Gospel of Jesus is then preached in Christian or in heathen lands, they must furnish the heralds of salvation. If religion then flourishes, or in the generations which follow them, it will be because great numbers of them are now converted to God. How earnest then, ought to be the prayers and the efforts of the church for the early conversion of the young! It is because I feel in some measure, the deep importance of this subject, as well as a peculiar interest in the salvation of the young in this congregation, that I have chosen this passage of Scripture as my text. It is, my young friends, a message from God addressed immediately to you. It encourages you to seek Him now, in the morning of life, and promises you that if you will, you shall certainly find Him.

I well know that all of you intend to seek Him before you die. Not one of you can endure the thought of going into eternity before you have secured your salvation.

Let me then ask your solemn attention while I urge upon you some of those motives which God has set before you in the Scriptures, to remember your Creator *now* in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh in which you will say you have no pleasure in them.

1. God has given you peculiar encouragements to seek Him while you are young.

The offers of salvation are indeed made to all men of all ages; yet God from a regard to His own honor, encourages men to embrace religion in the morning of life. To suppose otherwise, is to suppose that God is willing that men should spend life in dishonoring Him; in injuring His cause, and provoking His anger, and should refuse to love Him and serve Him, until their faculties are decayed, and they can do nothing in his service. Every page in

the sacred volume justifies this conclusion. Why has God required your parents to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to instruct and exhort you—to warn and reprove you—to give you line upon line, and precept upon precept, and to teach you the truths and duties of religion when you lie down and when you rise up—when you go out and when you come in—in the city and in the field, if He did not intend that you should love Him and obey him in childhood and youth? Why did he require parents publicly to dedicate their children to Him in the ordinances of circumcision and baptism, except to secure the faithful discharge of this important duty. The Scriptures are full of instruction and warnings to the young. The Proverbs of Solomon were written to give subtlety to the simple—to the young man knowledge and discretion.

Ministers are required to exhort young men to be sober-minded, and to fear the Lord in their youth. The encouragements which God has given you to embrace religion early, are presented in many forms. You will find them in various typical representations in the Old Testament. The manna was a type of the bread of life. It could be gathered only in the morning. The Jews were required to offer the *first fruits* of the ground in their oblations and the firstlings of the flocks in sacrifice. It was *early in the morning* that Lot and his family escaped from Sodom. It was *in the morning* that the Israelites went forth from Egypt—that they passed through the Red Sea, and that under Joshua they entered Canaan. All these are typical of the deliverance of the sinner. God speaks the same language in these comparisons by which he illustrates the nature of a religious life. The sinner's first attention to religion is called *putting the hand to the plough*. But if the husbandman does not plough *in season*, he will plough in vain. He calls Christians the *planting* of the Lord. But if seeds are not planted in the spring, there will be no harvest. He compares the church to a vineyard, but if the vines are not set in the vineyard when young, they will bear no fruit. He represents their annexation to the church by the process of *ingrafting*; but if this process is to succeed, a young and tender shoot must be inserted.

The sinner's restoration is compared to healing the sick. But the only hope of success is to send for the physician in the early stages of the disease, before it is seated in the constitution. A religious life is represented by a race. But if the winner was not on the spot in season, and prepared to enter the lists at the commencement of the race, he could have no opportunity of winning the prize. He gives you the same encouragement in numerous examples of early piety.

What bright encomiums are passed on the conduct of Samuel and David—of Obadiah and Isaiah—of Jeremiah and Timothy, because they began to fear the Lord in childhood and youth. Their history is recorded to convince you that God will bless you, if you early embrace religion. He teaches you the same thing in

the form of direct instruction. His language to you is, "Remember *now* thy Creator, in the days of thy youth." You are to do it not only while young, but now, without delay or procrastination. He directs you, "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He teaches you that those who flourish in the courts of our God, are they who are *planted* in the house of the Lord, or who in the morning of life unite themselves to His Church. And in the text he gives you the gracious assurance that they who seek him early shall find him. These are only specimens of the customary language of the Scriptures. They show you how much God has done to persuade you *now* to commence a life of piety.

2. Youth is, for many reasons, incomparably the best time to seek your salvation. It is the season most free from the cares and anxieties of the world. Your parents now provide for your wants and take care of all your interests. An infinitely wise God has so ordered it in his providence that the season of childhood and youth should be comparatively a season of *leisure*, and it would seem for the very purpose of furnishing you, in the beginning of your days, the best and happiest opportunity of seeking his favor. He knew that this ought to be the first, as it is infinitely the most important business of life. He has left you therefore a *vacant space*, not filled up with other business, that it might be devoted to the great one of seeking eternal life. Now you have the best opportunity for reading and prayer, and for seeking God in religious retirement and meditation. If it passes away without improvement, a similar opportunity will never return. I know you fondly imagine that you shall enjoy a still more auspicious season, in manhood and old age. But go and ask those who are advanced in life, and they will tell you that they bitterly lament their having devoted their childhood and youth without securing their salvation. Your minds are now comparatively free from prejudice against the truth of God. The minds of the young are usually fair, and candid, and open to conviction. You have not yet been occupied in perverting the truth of God—in fortifying yourselves against its influence—in justifying your sins, and in persuading yourselves that it is safe to lead a life of impenitence. Your hearts are now less hardened in sin. They are, I well know, sinful by nature; yet the perpetration of sin has a singular and constant tendency to harden the heart. Especially is this true of sins against the clear knowledge of duty and the reproofs of conscience. Those who have grown old in impenitence, I need not say have continued much longer in the practice of sin. They have sinned much oftener, and against a fuller knowledge of their duty, and have more frequently violated the dictates of conscience. They have committed greater and more presumptuous sins. Their perverseness in sin has been far more obdurate. They have resisted more numerous and more solemn warnings—have turned a deaf ear to more invi-

tations of mercy—have violated more solemn resolutions—have oftener perverted those means of grace, and far more dreadfully resisted the Holy Spirit. All these things have directly tended to stupify the conscience and harden the heart.

Though your hearts are by nature equally prone to sin with those of older sinners, you have not like them riveted the habit of sinning. Wicked men, as they advance in life, become so addicted to particular sins by indulgence, that there is no hope of reformation. Look at an old epicure, or miser—at an old libertine, or liar, or devotee of ambition, or at an old worldling of any other class, and you will see a man almost beyond the reach of mercy. It was the knowledge of this fact that led the prophet Jeremiah to ask the solemn and appalling question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? then may ye that are accustomed to do evil learn to do well." His sinful habits render the reformation of such a man exceedingly difficult, if not impossible.

If at any time he attempts to reform, he is so accustomed to yield to temptation that he violates all his resolutions and promises, and enters anew on the course of transgression. The man who would seek salvation with success, must thoroughly renounce all his sins and deny every lust. This is the stone over which such multitudes stumble and fall. There is not probably a man in this house who has not at some time or other sought reconciliation to God. Yet how few appear to be reconciled. The reason is, they cannot be brought to a thorough reformation. They are so wedded to their sinful indulgences, that they cannot consent entirely to renounce them.

The man who has thoroughly reformed his sinful practices, has advanced a most important step towards salvation. I need not tell you that it is very difficult to break off our sins, even in youth. But it is far more difficult in after life. How much easier to pluck up a tree by the roots when it is a tender sapling, than when it has stood for many years, and sent forth its roots deep and strong into the earth. Your minds also are now more tender and susceptible of deep and powerful impressions. As you advance in sin, your feelings will become more callous, and your unbelief more absolute and hopeless. Look at the aged sinner. The means of grace have been so long used that they have lost their efficacy. He has listened to the terrors of the law until they have ceased to alarm his fears—to the invitations of the Gospel until they no longer rouse his hopes. His heart has become sermon-proof, and the love of a dying Savior no more melts him into tenderness. He has grown bolder in sin, and is less afraid of the wrath of God. Threatenings which once made him tremble, now pass by him like the idle wind. Truths which were once followed by conviction, now hardly excite a momentary attention. He has so often stifled convictions, that there is little prospect they will ever return. If they do, even, they will probably be faint and momentary.

But if persons are to seek salvation in earnest, their convictions

of sin must be deep and thorough. Without this they will seek for many years to enter in at the strait gate, and will not be able. If also you seek the favor of God now, you have far more reason to expect his assistance and blessing. As youth is the time which God has appointed for this very purpose—the time when he has encouraged and commanded you to seek him—you may rationally hope he will aid all your efforts, and the Scriptures assure you that this hope shall not be disappointed. The providence of God confirms this position. Rarely, indeed, if ever, do the young engage in earnest in seeking salvation, but they find it. In how many important respects then is youth the best season you will ever enjoy of gaining eternal life! Can you, then, my *young friends*, waste it in folly and in sin, and thus lose your fairest opportunity of securing glory, honor, and immortality?

3. God has a right to your best services.

He made you—he upholds you—he blesses you—he is always doing you good. Your daily bread and your daily raiment—the ground on which you tread, and the air which you breathe—the heat which warms you and the light by which you see, reminds you continually of his unmerited goodness. And when your sins deserved his anger, he spared not his only begotten Son, but freely gave him up to die, that you might have life through his blood. What stronger claims then can exist? What stronger obligations can you conceive of, to bind you to his service? But what is the return that he asks for these infinite blessings? He requires no sacrifice but that of sin and the misery which follows it; no service but the promotion of your own highest welfare for time and for eternity. He asks you to escape from hell and choose the way to heaven. If you *comply*, He will gain nothing. You will not make *Him* richer, more powerful or happy. The gain will all be your own. It will be the final salvation of your immortal souls. Has not this great Being a right then to this return? Is it an unreasonable request, when he asks you to choose life rather than death, and heaven rather than hell; an unwarrantable demand, when he requires you to love him with all the heart? Is it not right that he should claim this return *now*, in the morning of life—that you should devote your youth and manhood, as well as your old age to his service? Do not infinite obligations press you, this very day to yield him your hearts? But suppose you were certain that after a life of sin and impenitence, you should repent on a dying bed; are you of so base and unworthy a spirit—so lost to all that is generous and dignified in character, as to be willing to make such a return to your great Benefactor? Do you wish to spend life in dishonoring God, and provoking his anger, and when your faculties are worn out, and your services are good for nothing, then to go and offer them to him, who led a life of toil and suffering, and died an accursed death for you? Is this the way, my *young friends*, in which the love of Christ constrains you

to live for him who died for you, and rose again? How much more honorable to dedicate yourselves now to his service! If you do, you will avoid the life of sin and impenitence by which others corrupt and debase themselves, and provoke his anger. You will consecrate to God your best faculties—the activity and ardor of youth—the vigor of manhood, and the wisdom and experience of age. In this way you will spend your whole being in his service, and secure the great act of your being.

4. Let me urge upon you the happiness you will secure by having God your friend.

If God is your friend, you will be at peace with him, and he will love you. He will relieve your wants, console your sorrows, and cause all things to work together for your good. Have you ever reflected how delightful it will be to have such a Friend in your progress through this miserable world? He is a Friend who is ever willing to hear your complaints, and to bear your afflictions. He will know not only your external sorrows, but the inmost troubles of the heart—the smart of conscience, or the pangs of a wounded spirit. Other friends, if they know your troubles, may be unable to relieve them. But no circumstances can be so calamitous—no misery so extreme, but his arm can relieve you of the burden, and convert your sorrow into joy.

At all times and in all situations he can give you the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Other friends, if able and willing, may not be present to relieve you in the hour of your calamity. But God will always be with you, a very present help in time of trouble. Are you awake or asleep, at home or abroad, on the land or on the ocean, in sickness or in health, His ear is always open to hear; His hand is always extended to bless. In seasons of solitude and darkness, when no other friend is nigh to help you, he will be conscious of your danger, and afford you effectual relief. Other friends may be separated from you by death, or if they live may prove unfaithful. But God will live for ever; and while he lives, will be your faithful and unchanging friend.

In the text he this day offers you his friendship. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." Now, while you are walking in the slippery paths of youth, surrounded by a thousand temptations and dangers, he reaches out his hand, and offers to guide and support you on your way through this wilderness of sin and sorrow. How happy—how inconceivably happy, if you can make use of this Almighty Friend! He will know all your wants, and pity your infirmities. He will attend you in all your ways, and lead you safe through every evil. His eye will watch your wanderings, and his ear listen to all your complaints. In all the miseries which contempt, and malice, and envy may inflict upon you, he will protect and deliver you. In that hour when heart and flesh fail, you shall fear no evil, for his rod and his staff shall comfort you.

5. Let me urge upon you the danger of delay.

The delay of repentance is dangerous in two respects. The aversion to repent increases, and life is uncertain.

Impressions made on the youthful mind are usually strong and lasting. From these strong impressions, successively made, the character is formed. Before this is done, the mind is easily moulded into any shape. Afterwards it cannot without difficulty be altered. Hence, the young are deeply interested to guard against sinful habits and to obtain those that are virtuous: that in the one case they may avoid the danger, and in the other enjoy the benefits of those deep and durable impressions. I know you intend, after enjoying the pleasures which the world has to bestow, at some future, happier period, to begin a renovation of life. If not before; yet when palsied by age or wasted by sickness, you will enter on the path to Heaven. Alas! you are yet to learn, and perhaps by fatal experience, that neither age nor sickness are the seasons for amendment. Go to the sick-bed of the sinner, and if his mind is neither torpid nor delirious by disease, you will usually see nothing but a dull, stupid indifference, mistaken perhaps for resignation or the horrors of despair. Are you calculating upon repentance in old age?

Is this the advice of God in the text?

Look too, at the aged sinner! The less he needs or can enjoy his earthly possession the more he loves them. Death is indeed nigher than in youth; but he does not realize his approach. *He* feels as sure of a year to come as *you* do *now* in the bloom of youth. And a year he thinks is long enough to complete the work of repentance. Thus he has always felt and acted, and thus he will continue to feel and act, until death cuts short his probation and closes the scene for ever. But why do you expect to repent in *old age*? You feel unwilling to begin that repentance now. Will you be *less* so as you grow older in iniquity? Will a life of sin prepare you for repentance? Will the strength of your evil affections and habits make it easier for you to turn to God? Why not now reform? Is it not because your love of the world and of sin is so strong that you cannot give it up? How then can you expect to relinquish it more unwillingly when that attachment is ten-fold stronger? As well might the drunkard hope for sobriety by another year's devotion to his cups. But are you sure that you shall live to old age; or that if you leave the world at an earlier period, a lingering sickness will give you this opportunity of repentance? Look around you and see how many of your former acquaintances are already slumbering in the grave. Go to yonder burying ground, and there number the dwellings of the dead. See what multitudes younger, or of the same age with you, inhabit those solitary mansions. Are you better than *they*; that you expect to become old and lay down your hoary head on the bed of death? Is it because you are purposing to grow old, to lead a life of sin, that you think God will spare you? How much rather ought you to fear that hitherto he has only endured you as rebels of wrath fitted for destruction.

Has God given you any *assurance* of your life? Has he told you, even that when yonder sun shall next rise in the east, he shall find you among the living? His language to you is, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Has he promised you that he will apprise you in season of the approach of death; and that during a lingering sickness his Spirit shall strive with you and bring you to repentance? Does he tell you that if you refuse his calls and disregard his invitations, and set at nought his counsels and despise his reproofs, he will not laugh at your calamity, or mock when your fear cometh; that when you call he will answer, and when you earnestly seek him you *shall* find him, because you hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord?

6. A distinguished place in Heaven is the certain reward of early piety.

The happiness of all who arrive in Heaven will be perfect; but the Scriptures teach us that the *degrees* of happiness will be very different. They command you to *lay up treasures* in heaven, because your treasure there may be indefinitely increased. They teach you that the righteous will be rewarded *according* to their works, that is, that their works will be the *measure* of their reward.

They assure you that in the resurrection, the saints will differ widely in their degrees of glory and happiness. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. One star also differs from another star in glory: *So also shall it be in the resurrection of the dead.* Every person, therefore, who has done great good to mankind, who has attained high degrees of grace and holiness, and who has approached nearer to the measure of stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, may expect to receive peculiar emanations of the Divine favor, and to shine with singular glory through the ages of eternity. And who are so likely to do all these things as they who commence a life of piety; who at this early period begin to tread the paths of wisdom and become the friends of the Most High. These will have the fairest opportunities to make great progress in the Divine life, and to show themselves vessels of honor, fitted for their Master's use. They will have much the longest time to serve God—to do good to man and to grow in holiness. None, therefore, stand so fair a chance of becoming eminent in piety here, or of shining with such distinguished lustre in Heaven. This is an ambition worthy of an immortal mind.

These are blessings, noble in their character, and lasting as eternity. This is the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus—the glorious reward which God himself proposes to early piety. Let it not then be said that you whose names may be enrolled with saints and angels, are contented to confine your views to this narrow life. Despise the unreal honors of this world, and let the end of all your actions be to become "Sons and Kings and Priests unto God."

Has God given you many and glorious encouragements to seek him in the morning of life? Is youth for many reasons, the best time you will ever enjoy to obtain salvation? Would you render to your Great Benefactor that return of gratitude and love which is due for his overflowing goodness. Would you wish an omnipresent, an infinitely wise, powerful, and faithful friend to be always with you, and to bless you as you are traveling the journey of life? Does the hope of your recovery grow fainter as you advance in sin; and are you uncertain of what a day may bring forth? Would you, finally, rise to immortal happiness and shine with distinguished glory in the church of the first-born? Let me beseech you, *this very day*, to enter on the work of salvation. Go to the Savior whose cross you have hitherto despised. Lay yourselves at his feet in the humble confession of your sins, and plead his blood for the pardon of them all. Offer him your *hearts*, and with them all that you have, and are, and shall be, for time and for eternity. Acknowledge—confess him publicly to be *your* Savior by a life of holy devotion to his service, and *he* will confess *you* to be his sincere and faithful disciples, when he shall come in the glory of the Father and with all his holy angels.